

PANEGYRIC
DELIVERED BY
HER EXCELLENCY ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
AT THE FUNERAL OF HIS EXCELLENCY THEOPHILUS ERNEST EASTMAN
FORMER MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
FORMER MINISTER OF STATE FOR PRESIDENTIAL AFFAIRS
FORMER SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE MANO RIVER UNION
AT THE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
ASHMUN STREET
MONROVIA, LIBERIA
MARCH 26, 2011

If, as I conjecture, his spirit hovers in this edifice and sees us, nothing would displease his soul so much as to see that we are grieving and solely saddened over his mortal departure.

During his lifetime, for those who knew him well and those who followed his life's career, Theophilus Ernest Eastman was a vigorous, energetic and smiling personality who displayed concern for other human beings, his family, peers, acquaintances, neighbors and friends. He was youthful, dynamic and never displayed negative and disappointing tendencies. Throughout his life, he displayed humor, demeanor and dedication to building Liberia's international relations and foreign policy, and to African Unity; as a team member, he made invaluable contributions within the spatial context in which the continent's history was evolving.

The 1960s was the DECADE of AFRICA. It was the period following the Second World War during which Africa was finding its place in world politics and struggling to fend off the shackles of colonialism and other vices that precluded equal rights for the people of emerging African nations. The continent was faced with threats from colonialism, apartheid and racism. The Cold War was at its peak and efforts for African unity and social cohesion were hampered by those who skewed the desires of the African continent for their own selfish and mean desires. These were challenging and difficult times for the peoples of Africa.

Liberia was struggling to hold on to its place in African and World politics. The Government at the time was concerned and made invaluable contributions toward the struggle for independence on the African Continent. The Liberian Government was unequivocally committed to the search for the creation of an Africa where all peoples are considered equal and a continent united for the advancement of all of its peoples.

T. Ernest, as he was fondly called, was a young man then, returning from acquiring higher education in the United States. The national leadership at the time spotted and tapped this young man who was active, jovial and accommodating. He quickly grew under the able tutelage of Secretary of State J. Rudolph Grimes. Since that time, some five decades ago, T. Ernest, until his demise, made his contributions and left his imprint on the formulation and development of Liberia's foreign policy and the shaping of Africa's quest for unity.

The Government of Liberia was in the midst of this struggle and young T. Ernest stayed the course, developing and promoting Liberia's foreign policy goals and initiatives. He spent many years working in this direction and remained dedicated to the cause of African Unity.

His mark is distinctly imprinted in the Charter of the African Union, then the Organization of African Union (OAU). For it was Eastman, the late David Neal, Edward R. Moore and Oliver Bright who spent months in the United States researching, formulating and drafting a Charter which is today the core document of the African Union. He was one of the architects of the Organization of African Unity along with former Secretary of State Grimes.

T. Ernest spent his life working for Liberia and Africa. His dedication, knowledge and experience were recognized by all Governments during his lifetime, to the extent that he served each and every one in one official capacity or another. Everyone who met and got to know him acknowledged his zest for life and he lived it to the fullest. Living four scores and four years, he never became a liability nor a burden to anyone. He drove his own car. He was active in the church and in education.

Apart from Foreign Service involvement, T. Ernest also worked during the formative years of the Mano River Union. He served as the second Secretary-General of the Mano River Union (MRU) with distinction. In the private sector, he served as manager of the Bong Mining Company, the second largest mining concession in Liberia. Wherever he was assigned, he served with distinction and honor.

With his passing, Liberia has lost a repository of knowledge and experience. He was a long-serving public servant, serving the country, his region, the continent and the world in so many capacities; promoting African Unity and Africa's development. He will be missed. In recognition of his invaluable services to the nation, and as a friend, I visited T. Ernest at his home and at the hospital during his illness. I must say that I am deeply saddened by the death of this noble Liberian statesman.

To the bereaved family, I extend my condolences and that of the Government and people of Liberia.

T. Ernest was a man filled with the joy of living. He was resourceful, optimistic, creative, an excellent speaker and, above all, he was a friend of mankind. We will remember him as a gracious personality and the warmth of personal friendship which he radiated.

Ambassador T. Ernest Eastman has left us, but his soul will forever be with the people of Liberia, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where, up to the time of his demise, he paid regular visits to exchange ideas and views with his colleagues. He has left us when we needed him most, especially now when the continent is faced with so many problems and challenges. But by God's grace, we can say that T. Ernest Eastman has done his task, he has fulfilled his commitment to the nation. We say thank you for a job well done. MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PERFECT PEACE.